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## The nonsense network

Today's letters section contains an astonishing communication from Ed Harris of New Carrollton, Md. — astonishing for the amount of misinformation the author crams into a mere 17 paragraphs. Did you know, for example, that the CIA assassinated Patrice Lumumba and that Anastasio Somoza killed "50,000 Nicaraguans" in his "war against the Sandinistas"? Neither did we. Neither did anybody else.

These are the kind of factoids you pick up from somebody who's smoking funny cigarettes. Take the business about Somoza's bloodbath. Somoza was no peach by any means. But 50,000 deaths? In a nation of fewer than 3 million persons? "Although nobody kept records on how many people died in the war," says *New York Times* reporter Shirley Christian in her just-published book, *Nicaragua: Revolution in the Family*, "the Red Cross estimated that 10,000 Nicaraguan lives were lost" — a somewhat more believable figure.

As for the CIA assassinating Lumumba, the charge is preposterous. True, the CIA once had such a plan, even as it once had a

plan to slip Fidel Castro something to make his beard fall out. But Lumumba wasn't bumped off by the CIA. His political rivals got there first.

Mr. Harris mentions the CIA's involvement in the overthrow of the Arbenz government of Guatemala, and here he gets within shouting distance of the truth. The CIA was involved, for a fact. What Mr. Harris neglects to mention is that Arbenz was working for the Soviet KGB, as revealed by Cuban defector Andres Alfaya Torrado, who served 19 years in Cuba's secret service. (Funny, Mr. Harris doesn't mention the thousands of political assassinations Dr. Castro has ordered up.)

Then there's the nonsense about the Israelis killing 20,000 Arabs in the Occupied Territories and Lebanon between 1967 and 1982, and the allegation of a "right-wing conspiracy" to kill Pope John Paul II, and ... But read Mr. Harris's letter for yourself, bearing in mind that one of his primary data banks, Noam Chomsky, also thinks that histories of the Nazi Holocaust are greatly exaggerated.